

Kallu's World 1 - In Big Trouble Again!

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PRATHAM BOOKS
A Book in Every Child's Hand

Level 4



“Kallu get up! You’ll get late for school again! KALLOOO!”

The urgent voice pierced through a lovely dream in which Kallu and his friend Damu were catching a huge fish in the river, and for some strange reason the fish was smiling at them.

Kallu pushed a bleary face out of his quilt and protested sleepily, “Shabbo it’s too early! I hardly slept!”

“No, it isn’t,” his brother Shabbo said firmly. “The sun came up long ago. Ammi has already milked the buffalo and we’ve all had breakfast.”

Kallu sat up shivering and looked out of the window and mumbled, “Sun? I don’t see any sun.”

“That’s the mist you idiot! Abbu has already gone to work in the vegetable field and all the school kids of our *mohalla* went past long ago.”

“Everyone’s gone?” Kallu about to yawn swallowed it in panic. “Even Munia?” Shabbo nodded silently, his face looking really gloomy.

“BAAP RE!”

Throwing back the quilt, Kallu struggled out of bed. He couldn't get late for school again! He just couldn't! Two days earlier, Masterji had threatened that one more late entrance in class and the punishment would get really serious. He was even thinking of not promoting him to the next class. And that too after he made Kallu stand in a corner holding his ears for hours and hours.

"I have to think up a story right now!" Kallu thought desperately as he hunted for his chappals under the bed. "A really wonderful, heartbreaking, very convincing story…"

He rushed at super speed to get ready, like he did every morning. He quickly splashed some freezing water on his face to really open his eyes, no bath of course.

Luckily it was winter or his mother would have made him take one. He grabbed a shirt, trousers and sweater and hopped about putting them on. Shoving his feet into his chappals, he looked at his younger brother and panted, “You’re so lucky Shabbo! No school for a whole month!”

Shabbo sitting by the window, his right leg covered in plaster, said grimly, “Sure! Breaking a leg is great fun. I love sitting here all day, getting so bored I could tear out my hair, while you go off with Damu to play football. *Zaroor*, I’m having fun!”

By the time he finished speaking, Kallu was already out of the house and half way down the lane. Shabbo leaned out of the window to watch his hurrying figure vanish through the swirling mist. Then a huge delighted grin slowly spread across his face.

“He’s gone!” Shabbo sang out.
“You can come out Munia!”

His sister Munia who had been hiding behind a cupboard, came out with an even bigger smile on her face. They were laughing so much that Munia got an attack of hiccups.

On his way out, Kallu had grabbed a dry chapati from the kitchen and now taking a bite he mumbled to himself, “A story Kallan Mian! A very convincing, brand new story or you’re standing in the corner again.”

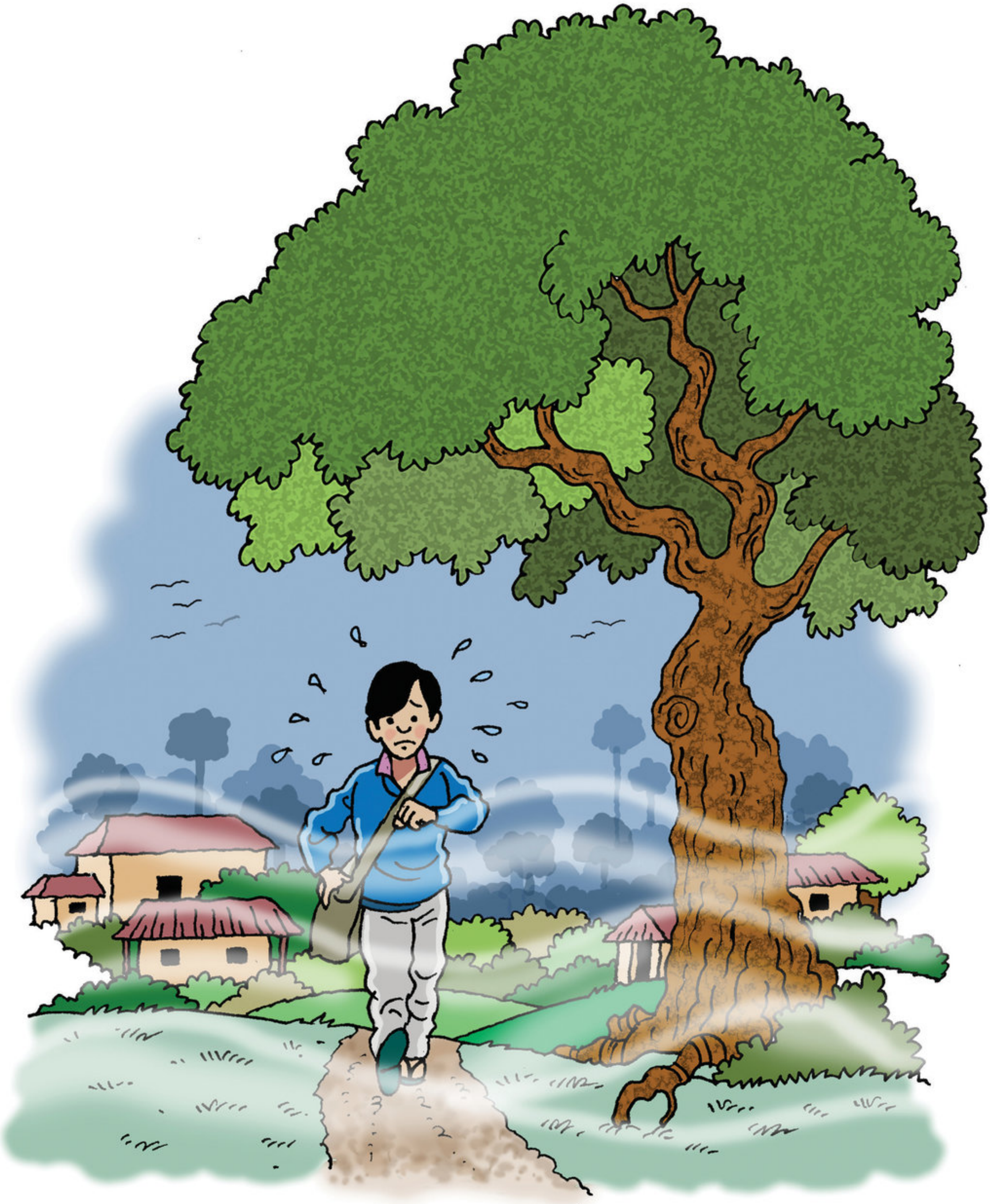
Life was a mystery to Kallu. He liked school, he really did. He enjoyed doing sums and learning science, he loved playing football and singing in the school programmes. But then why, oh why, did he find it so hard to get to school on time? Even Masterji couldn’t really understand it.



He had suggested sarcastically that Kallu should start sleeping in the school veranda at night, and all the other kids in his class had laughed at Kallu.

The problem was that things were getting serious now. If Masterji really did not promote him to class nine, then he was in deep trouble because then his Abbu would make him leave school and make him work in the vegetable fields. Who wanted to pull up spinach and collect carrots and peas when he could go to school? School was a hundred times more fun and he knew that if he could pass the twelfth class board exam, he could find a good job, may be even go to college! Going to college… ah! That was Kallu's biggest dream.

What Kallu really wanted to do, was to complete his twelfth class and then learn about computers.



Masterji said he had the brains to do that. Last month, he had taken their class to a computer show in the nearby town and they all thought the machines were totally amazing! The salesman had shown him the correct way to use the mouse and how you could go into the Internet. That was absolute magic! Now Kallu and Damu wanted to become magicians with the mouse, going zip-zap across the computer screen.

On the way back in the bus, he and Damu had worked out a fantastic plan. Now that the new highway went past Khajuria village, they would open a dhaba-cum-STD booth-cum-computer centre right beside it. Damu, who dreamed of food all the time would run the dhaba, and Kallu would manage the STD booth.

Truck drivers would eat at the dhaba and call home from the STD booth and the people from all the nearby villages sending vegetables, wheat and sugarcane to the wholesale market, could check out the latest market prices on the Internet.

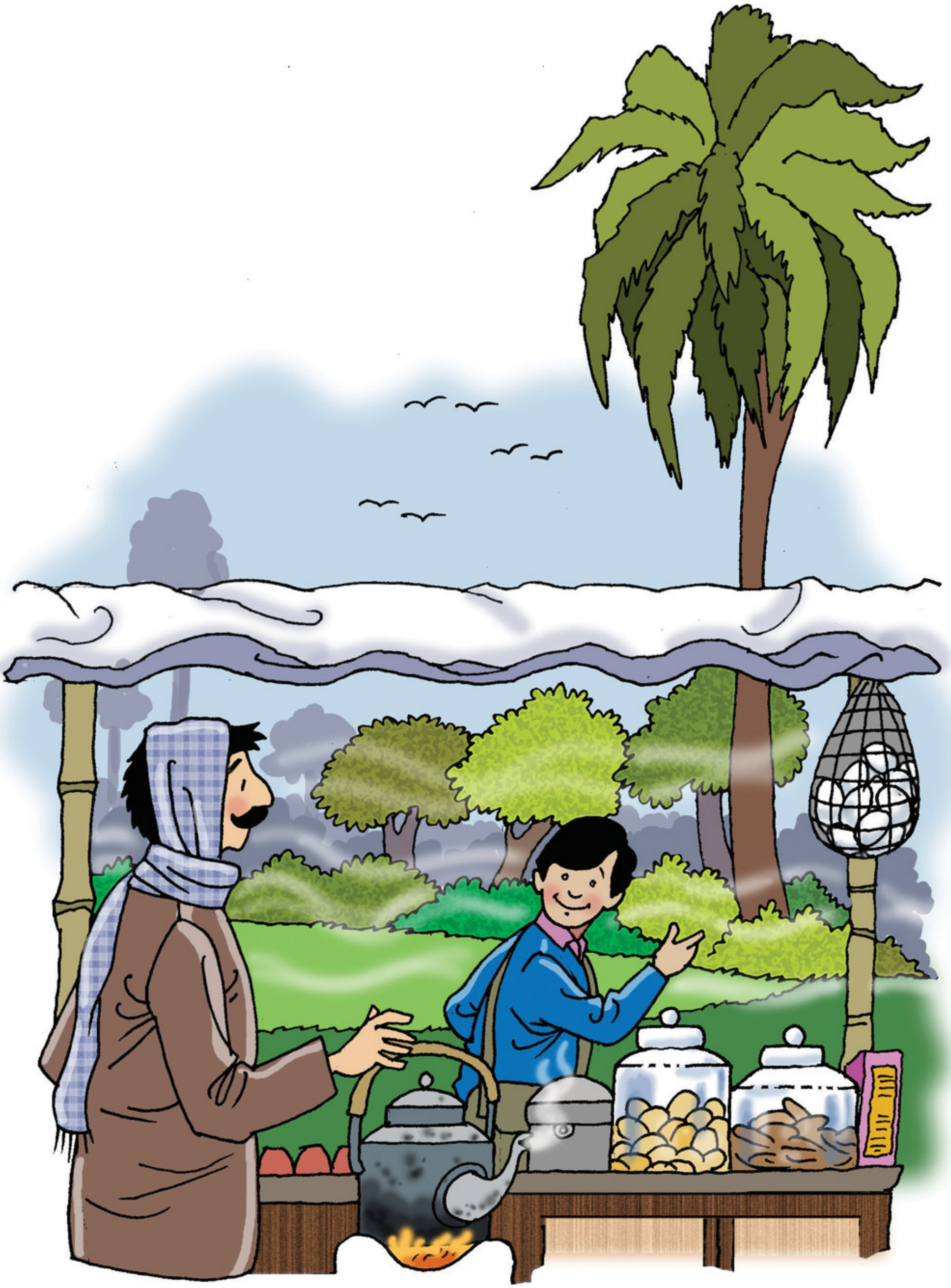
“Kya baat! ‘Damodar Dhaba and Kallan Computer Centre’.” Damu smiled and then turned to give Kallu an anxious glance, “If only you would get to school on time.”

Whizzing past the tea shop, still munching the chapati, Kallu yelled, “Salaam Dharam Chacha!”

Dharampal, the chai shop owner, looked up from the boiling kettle and gave a surprised look, “Arrey it’s Kallu!” Then his grin widened as his eyebrows shot up, “What’s the matter? Did the sun rise from the west today? Where are you going so early in the morning?”
“Schoooooool!”

“Have a pakora first!” And he laughed. “Garam garam Dharam ke pakorey!”

Hurrying along Kallu had no time to reply. Dharampal Chacha jokes about everything, he grumbled to himself. Here Kallu was in serious trouble and he was talking about silly pakoras. What was so funny about Kallu getting late for school anyway? It happened every week!



Of course, the most disastrous was when he arrived late, day before yesterday. There was a rehearsal for the 26th January programme and when he crept into the school courtyard, they were already singing “Jaiya he!” of the National Anthem. And Kallu was supposed to be there in front with Damu, Munia and Saru leading the singing.

So he stood at the back, sang “Jaiya he!” and was trying to sneak off to class when someone grabbed him by the collar and hauled him back.

His heart nearly stopped as he looked up at Masterji’s grim face.

“You are again late for rehearsals, so you’re out of the show.” Masterji’s voice was cold as ice.

“Oh no! Please Masterji!” Kallu had tears in his eyes and these were real tears, not the ones he could bring out at will. He really wanted to be part of the show. “Please… please…” he pleaded desperately. “I promise I won’t be late again.”

“Fine.” Masterji’s voice softened a bit. “I’ll let you go this time, but one more late mark and you’re out! Get that?” Kallu nodded with a sniff. By then they had reached Kallu’s classroom and as Kallu headed to his seat, he said, “Where are you going? Stand in the corner, holding your ears.” His classmates had already begun to giggle when Masterji came up with the final, terrible threat, “May be I won’t promote you. Kallan - failed in eighth because of late marks!”

And now he was late again. His life was over.

A good story… thought Kallu …a really credible excuse. He had come up with so many in the past, why couldn’t he think of a new one today?

In his mind’s eye, he could see Masterji frown in disbelief looking down at Kallu, as he stood stammering and stuttering away. He was concentrating so hard on his story, he ran straight into a herd of buffaloes.

Just my luck, he thought in disgust, dodging the mooing cattle. In a life threatening crisis like this, what do I do? I crash into Badri and his fat buffaloes. Puffing and panting, slithering through the mud, he struggled through. Badri, the mad buffalo man in his huge turban, waved a stick in greeting and smiled behind his bushy moustache.

“Aren’t you early Kallu? Why don’t you help me wash the buffaloes and then go to school?”

“Are you joking?”
“No. I’ll give you five rupees. There’s time, you’re early.”

“Sure, I’m early,” muttered Kallu irritated. “I’m so early it’s not even today yet, it’s still yesterday. And I’ll also feed your buffaloes and dance with them.”

“Heh! Heh!” Badri laughed as he slapped a buffalo on the rump. “You’re really funny Kallan!”

Kallu kept running. The whole village is against me, he thought gloomily, even crazy Badri.



Can’t they stop joking and teasing a poor boy like me? And then he got busy with the story-cum-excuse problem once again.

Ammi was sick and he had to make breakfast? Nope. He’d tried that one at least twice before. It won’t work again.

The goat had run away? Nah! It didn’t work last time. Someone stole his pen? The pen was right there in his school bag.

His chappals broke and he had to get them repaired? No way! They were brand new.

Going past Damu’s house, he saw his best friend and his sister Saru sitting on a charpai in the courtyard, eating breakfast. Ha! They were late too, Kallu thought in triumph, and they are still eating, so they’ll come in after me, and hopefully Masterji will be so busy yelling at them, he’ll forget about me.

Damu looked up, his eyes wide in surprise, “Oye Kallu! Wait for me yar!”

“Paranthas, Kallu Bhaiya,” Saru called out. “Gobhi paranthas!”

“No time!” Kallu huffed past at full speed. “Meet you in school.”

“Theek hai. See you later.” Damu shrugged and went back to eating.

Damu and Saru are so lucky, Kallu thought. They lived right next to school. They could even leave home when the school bell rang. As he got to the school gate, Kallu’s heart began to thud really fast. Guess who was standing there, stuffing a paan into his mouth. Masterji!! Talk of bad luck!

Kallu skated to a stop, and began in a nervous rush, "I'm sorry I'm late Masterji, but today it's not my fault at all! I had to help Shabbo take a bath. You know he's broken his leg and…" he came to a sudden stop because of an amazing sight. Masterji, the scariest human being on earth, was laughing!

"Wait!" Masterji held up a hand, while he tried to stop from choking on his paan. "Why are you telling me a new story today?"

"What story?" Kallu tried hard to look shocked. "I never tell stories… I mean… but…" Things are getting very strange here, thought Kallu. "Every word is hundred percent true, Masterji!"

“You are nearly fifteen minutes early Kallan,” Masterji’s smile still lingered.

“EARLY?” Kallu froze in shock. “WHAT DO YOU MEAN EARLY?”

Masterji pointed to his watch, “See? Seven forty five.”
“Munia’s not here?”

“No one’s here yet.” And Masterji laughed again, sending out a spray of paan juice into the air. “No one except you!”

Kallu stood still, “You mean I could have slept more? I had time for breakfast?” He nodded to himself. “Now I know. It’s Shabbo and Munia. I’ll kill them. I really will. Just because Shabbo is bored he’s played this trick on me.”

"And you wasted a good story too," Masterji said sympathetically. "Better come in anyway."

"I'll make Shabbo pay for this," Kallu said through gritted teeth.

"I really will."
"What will you do?"
"I'll break his other leg!!" said Kallu with a glare.

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Kallu's World 1 - In Big Trouble Again!
(English)

Kallu is late for school again. Where did he make his goat run away this time? Or who was sick? He needs to find a story badly... a convincing one. Welcome to Khajuria - a village where young Kallu and his gang run delightful adventurous riots almost everyday. Sometimes they question village traditions, defy bullies or just go about their daily business, but Kallu and his gang are up for anything. Join them as they grow wiser and wittier, as they happily roam the village finding new things to do, and see what they come up with!

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.

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